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***Additional comments to the Maryland Dept. of Planning Clearinghouse re:
MD20081117-1057, Master Plan Update, Transportation Management Plan, and
Existing Building Assessments: National Naval Medical Center (NNMC) in Bethesda,
MD.***

Thank you for giving Montgomery County the opportunity to comment on the Master Plan Update (MPU) and Transportation Management Plan (TMP) submitted by the National Naval Medical Center on November 7, 2008.

The MPU, which includes the TMP, is generally consistent with Montgomery County's plans, programs and objectives, but it is important to consider the impacts of growth at NNMC, particularly relating to Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), on the surrounding community. Under BRAC, personnel at NNMC will increase from 8,000 to 10,500 by September 2011 when the expansion project is due to be completed. Significantly, the hospital patient and visitor load will double. All totaled, BRAC expansion is expected to generate approximately 4,000 additional visits to the NNMC campus every day.

It is important to note that this BRAC expansion is taking place in a developed and settled urban environment where the transportation infrastructure is already at capacity, making it essential that the Navy take effective steps to reduce single occupancy vehicular traffic. The MPU/TMP outlines certain on-campus measures that the Navy will implement to improve on-base traffic movement and encourage NNMC personnel to utilize alternative modes of transportation.

In addition, Montgomery County has urged the Navy and Department of Defense to do the following:

- Take responsibility for the construction of an entrance to the Medical Center Metro station on the east side of MD 355 (Rockville Pike/Wisconsin Avenue).
- Provide regular and frequent shuttle bus service for NNMC personnel and visitors from the Metro entrance to destinations throughout the NNMC campus. The DNPU addresses shuttle service but is not clear whether or how much such service will apply to commuters to NNMC

- Take responsibility for turn lane, traffic flow and pedestrian safety improvements at the main campus entrances along MD 355. NNMC is studying these traffic issues but a firm commitment to construct them is necessary.

These steps must be implemented in an expedited manner to prepare the community for the opening of the expanded facilities by September 2011. If they are not, then the BRAC mission establishing the country's flagship military medical center will surely be compromised if a doctor, patient or emergency vehicle cannot gain timely access to the NNMC campus because they are mired in gridlock.

Again, thank you for giving Montgomery County the opportunity to comment on the Master Plan Update for the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda.

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